



# ENGAGING »»» OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

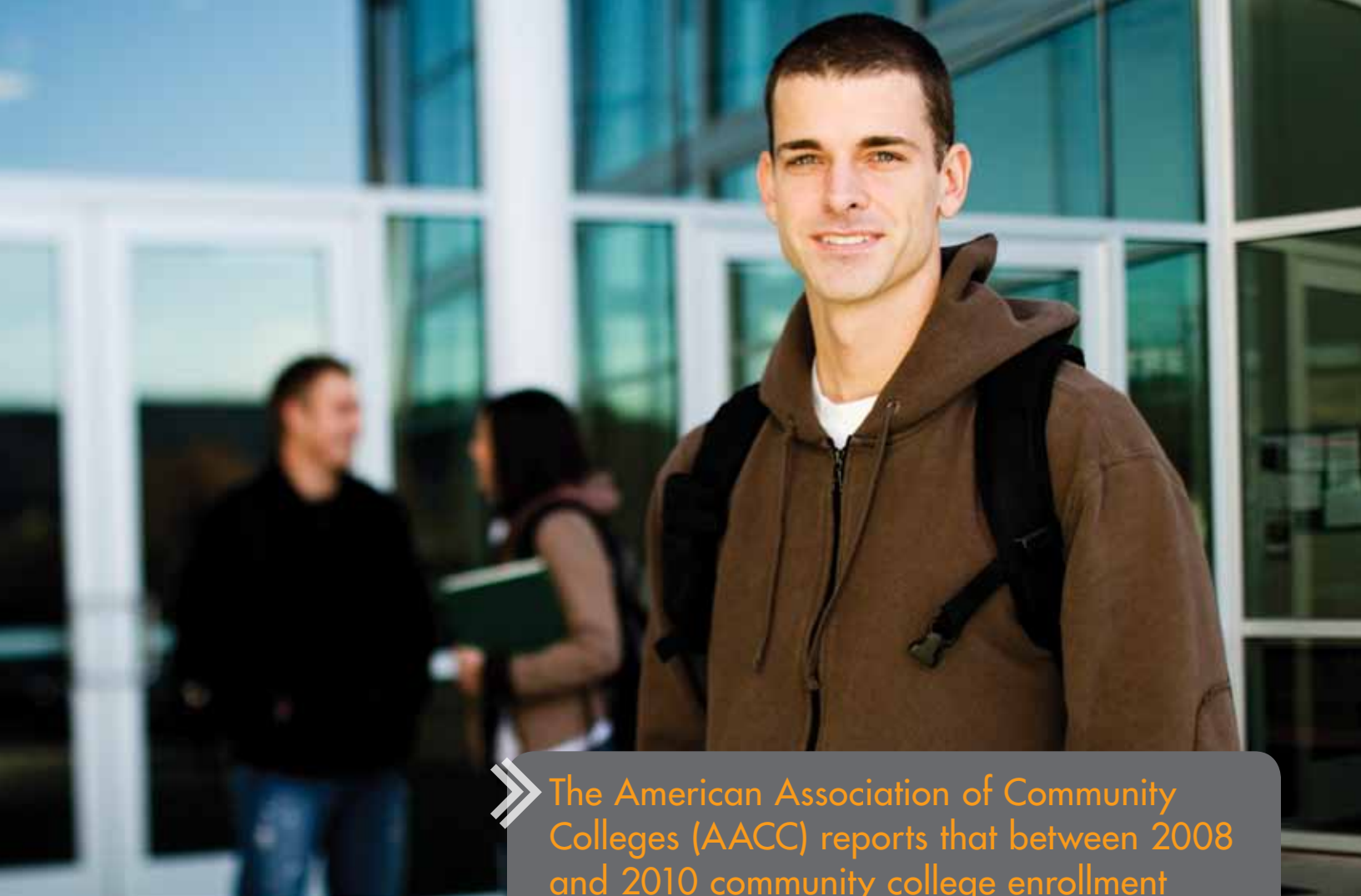


**D**id you know that there are over 12.4 million students enrolled in community colleges across the United States that comprise nearly 1,200 separate public, independent, and tribal institutions? The United States and Canada have a long tradition in recognizing that there are considerable social and economic benefits of providing high quality education to as many people as possible. Community colleges made a significant contribution in expanding educational opportunities for the masses. Attendance at one of these institutions is associated with higher wages, even if a degree is not completed.

As the United States and Canada recover from the global economic crisis that began in 2008, it has become readily apparent that community colleges enjoyed tremendous growth. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) reports that between 2008 and 2010 community college enrollment increased an average of 15 percent. The rapid growth of community college enrollment along with the economic downturn has placed a tremendous importance on the operation of the college facilities. Reduced federal and state aid to colleges and universities, increasing concerns over the cost of college education, budget cuts, and future spending issues—targeting spending, major cutbacks, and travel restrictions—are all reasons that community colleges need new and effective leadership more than ever.

#### **DRAW FROM APPA**

Since its founding in 1914, APPA has become a premier association serving diverse memberships of international educational institutions in all areas of facilities management. Given that fact, why are there only 188 institutional community college members within APPA's total membership of nearly 1,500? Could it be that APPA's rich history of providing programs, products, and services designed to increase the effectiveness of the educational facility professional is perceived by many to be designed primarily for colleges and universities that offer baccalaureate, master's, and doctorate degrees? After all, it was not until 1969 that APPA included two-year institutions into its membership. I contend, as an APPA member and a facility professional from a community college for the past 20 years, that being involved with an organization like APPA provides a vast amount of resources to draw from regardless of the type and size of the institution.



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APPA leadership has taken action by developing several specific initiatives to increase recruitment and engagement of community colleges.

In May 2010 the president of each of APPA's six regional organizations were asked to recommend a person from its region to serve in a group of Community College "Champions." This group would assist APPA in identifying ways to further engage APPA's community college members and prospective members in APPA activities. Since that time the community college engagement group has been steadily increasing in numbers and has made tremendous strides in developing initiatives to support community college facility professionals. The group is working hard at identifying potential new members within the community college ranks. The potential members have or will receive personal invitations along with follow-up phone calls from the community college champion in their local area pointing out the benefits available through APPA and dates for upcoming events and professional development offerings.

***The organization of a series of state-based or systems-based community college meetings and forums.*** A community college state symposium was organized by Bill Ward from Pima Com-

munity College and Polly Pinney from Arizona State University in May 2010. The symposium was promoted as a statewide event where facilities professionals could receive information on relevant issues and gain valuable networking from those in attendance. (Learn more about the Arizona effort in the Membership Matters column on p. 12.) Other community college champions that have been active in promoting and organizing state-based meetings are Joe Wojtysiak from Harrisburg Area Community College in Pennsylvania and JB Messer from Oklahoma Community College in Oklahoma.

***APPA's Facilities Drive-In Workshop*** initiative was launched in May 2010 with the first drive-in workshop being held at the Metropolitan Community College in Kansas City, Missouri and sponsored by Tandus Flooring. This program was created to provide the local delivery of professional development and training to educational facilities professionals within a two-hour driving distance to the workshop site; reach out to professionals who may not have access to training and professional development opportunities due to operating budget restrictions or similar constraints; and to encourage networking and engagement of facility professionals within the APPA organization. Since that initial launch





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several drive-in workshops have been held at locations around the country including one that was hosted by Alamo Community College and sponsored by Delta Controls in San Antonio, Texas. With many more APPA Drive-In Workshops in the planning stage they provide an excellent way for APPA member institutions to enhance grassroots membership and network within their local vicinity.

*The APPA 2011 Conference*, being held July 16-18 in Atlanta, Georgia, is designing blocks of time for sessions that will focus not only on the needs of community colleges, but for K-12 schools, liberal arts colleges, and other specific groups to ensure the program and content is relevant to the entire community of facilities professionals. A special session will be conducted this summer in Atlanta similar to the APPA 2010 Conference in Boston, Massachusetts where representatives from community colleges met for open discussion designed specifically to determine how APPA can engage and support community colleges facility professionals. Several recommendations of the community college engagement group have been implemented including the creation of an email discussion board for all community colleges and the creation of a mini-survey to solicit suggestions from community colleges on program content and programming for APPA 2011.

*A Plan of Action for 2010-11* was approved by the APPA Board of Directors in July 2010. This plan consisted of seven strategies for the upcoming year. One of those strategies was to recruit and retain several targeted institutional classifications such as Community Colleges, K-12 schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and small liberal arts colleges.



Subsequently the APPA committees (Information and Research, Membership, Professional Affairs, and Professional Development) have been working diligently over the past months on initiatives for APPA to engage and serve these institutional classifications.

As APPA moves forward in its **Vision:** *To become a global partner in learning by fostering competency, collaboration, credibility for the facilities professional and their organizations in support of the academic mission.* APPA leadership is developing a new APPA strategic plan that will include clear objectives and strategies for meeting the needs of the community college facility professional now and in the future.

Indeed, the future relationship between APPA and community colleges seems bright. It is more important than ever for APPA to be resolute and continue to develop programs based on its strategic plan in these uncertain economic times. Facility professionals from educational institutions need to provide new and effective leadership now more than ever. The broad impact of facilities on an educational institutions success provides an unprecedented opportunity for facility professionals and also new skill set opportunities. With all its history, experience, and professional resources, APPA has taken the role as the professional association of choice for facility professionals and their institutions. ☺


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AKF & APPA

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